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THE PROBLEM OF EASTERN GALICIA, 1919-1923

I. DESCRIPTION OF THE AREA AT THE TIME OF THE PEACE CONFERENCEA. Location

Eastern Galicia was a part of the Austrian Empire from 1772 to 1918. Under Austrian rule it was administered as a separate unit only for the brief period between 1849 and 1860; after 1860 it existed as a judicial district but was administered as a part of the Crownland of Galicia. The judicial district included that part of the Crownland situated east of the western boundaries of the administrative districts of Jaroslaw, Przemyśl, Brzozów and Sanok, roughly the line of the San River. It was bounded on the north and east by the Russian Empire, and on the south by Hungary and Bukovina.

The strategic importance of Eastern Galicia was obvious. It had lain on the route of Russia's invasion of Hungary in 1849 and had been the scene of almost continuous fighting between the Austrian and Russian armies in the recent war. In Polish hands, as in those of Austria, it would serve as a protective zone for Central Europe against possible Russian expansion to and across the Carpathians. In the plans for a cordon against the Bolsheviks which were then current in Allied circles Eastern Galicia was an all-important territorial link between Poland and Rumania.

B. Area and Population

Eastern Galicia, with an area of 21,336 square miles, made up slightly more than two-thirds of the Crownland of Galicia. In 1910 its total population was 5,335,821. According to the Austrian statistics on language of use (Umgangssprache), 40 percent of the inhabitants were Polish-speaking, 59 percent were Ruthenian-speaking. These statistics are misleading since some 660,000 Yiddish-speaking Jews were listed as Polish-speaking. The statistics on religion indicate more clearly the relative strength of the Poles and Ruthenians (Ukrainians), with 26 percent Roman Catholics (Poles) and 62 percent Uniates (Ukrainians). There were Polish majorities only in the westernmost districts, in the city and district of Lemberg (Lwów), and in three districts in the easternmost part of the province. Elsewhere the Ukrainians were the more numerous element, in the Carpathian region in the south their preponderance

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was overwhelming. Lwów, the principal city of Eastern Galicia, was strongly Polish with a large Jewish element. The Ukrainians were for the most part a backward peasant population, while the Poles were well represented in all social classes. For centuries the governing and property-owning classes had been Polish. In the half-century preceding the World War, thanks to a working agreement with the Austrian Emperor, they had a virtual monopoly on government positions and controlled the Galician Diet. During this period the process of the "Polonization" of Eastern Galicia made fairly rapid strides, aided by the immigration of Poles from Western Galicia, the emigration of Ukrainians to America, and the assimilation of Ukrainians in the Polish-speaking cities and towns. Although clearly in the minority, the Poles never ceased to look upon Eastern Galicia as a Polish land.

C. Economic Resources and Communications

The most important mineral resources of Eastern Galicia were its deposits of petroleum and of natural gas. Production of crude petroleum reached two million tons in 1909. The principal oil-fields district (Drohobycz-Boryslaw) was located in an area with a Ukrainian majority, but the industry had been developed by Poles and the engineers and workers were nearly all Polish. At the Peace Conference Galician oil was considered to be of great importance to the new Polish state, which had no other sources of oil. It was recognized as of potential value to the Ukraine as well, especially since the future of the Caucasus was then in doubt.

A trunk railway ran from central Poland through Eastern Galicia to the new Greater Rumania, which in 1918 came into possession of the former Austrian province of Bukovina. As an alternative to the uncertain outlet to the Baltic, this southern route promised to be of great economic and strategic importance to Poland.

II. CONFLICTING CLAIMS TO EASTERN GALICIA

A. Projects for the Disposition of Eastern Galicia, 1914-1918

During the World War Eastern Galicia was involved in the various territorial plans conceived by Russia and by the Central Powers, each power being intent on solving the problems of Polish and Ukrainian nationalism to its own advantage. Meanwhile both Polish and Ukrainian leaders,

continuing

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continuing their bitter and long-standing nationality conflict, used every means to make capital of the rapidly-changing military and diplomatic developments.

When Russian armies occupied Eastern Galicia in 1914-15, the Russian authorities gave every indication that its permanent incorporation into the Russian Empire was envisaged. A campaign of Russification was instituted; both Polish and Ukrainian nationalists were persecuted. However, the conquest of Russian Poland and the reconquest of Galicia by German and Austrian forces in 1915 placed the whole Polish question in the lap of the Central Powers. Certain influential circles in Austria favored the "Austrian solution" of this question, namely the union of Galicia and Russian Poland under the Habsburgs. Germany, however, pushed the idea of a nominally independent Poland under German control, excluding Galicia, which was to remain in Austria.

In November 1916 this German scheme was put into effect by a joint declaration of the German and Austrian Emperors. Simultaneously the Austrian Government promised wide autonomy to the Galician Poles. This autonomy was still "under consideration" two years later when the military front of the Central Powers collapsed. On October 16, 1918, an Imperial Manifesto declared that Austria was to become "a federal state in which every nationality within its own territory forms its own commonwealth". This measure, however, was "not to prejudice in any way the union of the Polish territories of Austria with the independent Polish State", in accordance with President Wilson's thirteenth Point, already accepted by Austria-Hungary, stipulating that "an independent Polish state should be erected which should include the territories inhabited by indisputably Polish populations".

With the disappearance of Austrian authority in Galicia, the field was left open for an open struggle for power between the Poles, who intended to incorporate the whole of Galicia in the new Poland, and the Ukrainians, who prepared to assert their claim to national self-determination in Eastern Galicia. The elimination of Russia and of the Central Powers from the picture left the disposition of Eastern Galicia to the victorious Allied and Associated Powers, before whom the Polish and Ukrainian leaders came to press their claims.

B. The

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B. The Polish Claims

After the Russian armies were driven out of all but a fraction of Eastern Galicia in 1915, the province was placed under Austro-German military rule and the old civil administration, which had been largely Polish in character, was not restored. This development and the failure of Austria to convert Germany to the "Austrian solution" of the Polish question weakened the loyalty of the Galician Poles to Austria. They began to doubt the return to the pre-1914 system which had been so favorable to them, and to cast about for other possible solutions. The renunciation by the revolutionary Russian Government, in March 1917, of all claims to ethnically Polish territory caused many of the Galician Poles to look forward to the creation of an independent Poland which would include Galicia, although Eastern Galicia was hardly ethnically Polish territory -- entirely free of any connection with Austria. Russia's weakness gave them confidence that Poland could expand to the east beyond its strictly ethnic border.

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The treaty signed at Brest-Litovsk between Austria-Hungary and the independent Republic of the Eastern Ukraine in February 1918 did not change the status of Eastern Galicia, but the cession to the Ukraine of the district of Kholm (Chelm) a part of Congress Poland adjacent to Eastern Galicia, and the promise later made by Austria that Eastern Galicia and the Ukrainian-speaking part of Bukovina would become an autonomous Austrian province, infuriated the Galician Poles, who were able to force the Austrian government not to fulfill its promise. In October 1918, when it became clear that the Austrian Empire could no longer be held together, the Polish leaders in Galicia cast off all loyalties to the Habsburgs and proclaimed the inclusion of all Galicia in the new independent Polish state.

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Meanwhile, a Polish National Committee, made up chiefly of leaders from Russian Poland, had been set up in Paris and had been recognized by the Allies as having political authority. In 1917 and in 1918 it had presented several statements of Poland's territorial claims to the leading powers of the Entente. These claims included the whole of Eastern Galicia. The Poles freely admitted the existence of a Ukrainian majority in that province but said that by its civilization and by its history it was "inseparably bound to Poland and could not be detached from it". Roman Dmowski, President of the Polish National Council, presented the Polish claims to the Peace Conference in a series of memoranda and in an oral statement before the Heads of Delegations. He admitted that Eastern Galicia was a "disputed territory" but held that Galicia as a whole was

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"essentially Polish", that Poland's historic right to it was buttressed by ethnic, economic, social and political factors. He maintained that only the Polish element in the population was capable of organizing a government. The Ukraine, he said, was in chaos and wholly incapable of existence as a separate state. He stressed the necessity of conceding Poland's territorial claims in the east, so that the new state would be able to perform its mission of Europe's bulwark against Bolshevism.

C. The Ukrainian Claims

Ukrainian nationalism had made greater progress in Eastern Galicia than in other Ukrainian-inhabited lands partly because of the relative tolerance of the Austrian as compared with the Russian and Hungarian regimes. Its leaders came from the small group of intellectuals and from the Uniate clergy. The social and economic struggle against the Polish ruling class contributed to the spread of nationalism among the Ukrainian peasants. During the last decade before the World War their cooperatives and agricultural associations made great progress, providing a nucleus for the movement for Ukrainian national independence which emerged from the breakdown of Austrian and Russian rule in the Ukrainian-inhabited lands in 1917 and 1918.

In contrast to the Poles, however, the Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia were not sure of their objective, nor were they united in its pursuit. Among the more conservative elements, pro-Russian feeling was stronger than Ukrainian national feeling. Much of this pro-Russian sentiment was dissipated by the conduct of the Russian authorities in Eastern Galicia in 1914-15. However, the idea that the Ukrainians were but a part of the Russian nation continued to be held by a portion of the Ukrainian population of Galicia, the so-called Lemki, or Carpatho-Russians, who inhabited the northern slopes of the Carpathian Mountains. Both Russophiles and Ukrainian nationalists regarded the Poles as the principal enemy, but their disagreement on the ultimate destiny of Eastern Galicia was to compromise the Ukrainian case at the Peace Conference.

In 1915 certain Ukrainian leaders had proposed to the Austrian Government that an autonomous Ukrainian state be created out of the Ukrainian-populated districts of Galicia and of Bukovina. This proposal was not accepted, and all faith in Austria was lost when in 1916 the Austrian Government committed itself to autonomy for Galicia as a whole, which to the Ukrainians meant submission to Polish rule. Austria's belated promise, in 1918, to give a special status to the Ukrainian-inhabited regions of the Empire, did not win over Ukrainian opinion and was never carried out. On October 19,

1918

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1918 a Ukrainian National Council at Lwów proclaimed the independence of a "Western Ukrainian Republic" comprising Eastern Galicia, Northern Bukovina and Subcarpathian Ruthenia.

At the Peace Conference the "Delegation of the Ukrainian Republic" presented claims to all territories having Ukrainian majorities, including all Eastern Galicia. On the other hand the "Carpatho-Russian Committee", claiming to represent the four and one-half million Ruthenians (Ukrainians) of former Austria-Hungary, asked for the union of Eastern Galicia, Northern Bukovina and Subcarpathian Ruthenia with "the restored Russian state". Both factions bitterly opposed Poland's claim to Eastern Galicia.

D. The Conflict between Poles and Ukrainians in Galicia in 1918-19

Fighting broke out between the Poles and the Ukrainians in Eastern Galicia even before the evacuation of German and Austrian troops. Long-smouldering social discontent broke out in attacks of Ukrainian peasants on the persons and properties of their Polish landlords. Out of the general chaos of unorganized fighting there developed a discernible battle front between the army of Poland, attempting to enter Eastern Galicia from the west, and the newly-organized forces of the Eastern Ukrainian Republic. The Poles soon took Przemyśl and the capital city, Lwów. The Ukrainians, unable to stand alone against the Poles, joined forces with the armies of the "Eastern Ukrainian Republic", which had been set up at Kiev, and in January 1919 the two states were declared united in one "Ukrainian National Republic".

The Polish-Ukrainian conflict in Eastern Galicia continued throughout the first half of 1919 despite the efforts of the Peace Conference to arrange an armistice. These military events had an obvious influence upon the decisions taken at Paris on the question of the disposition of Eastern Galicia. The Ukrainian cause was compromised in the eyes of the Allied statesmen by virtue of the fact that some Ukrainian leaders had accepted the support of Germany and of Austria in combating the Poles, and also because the armies of the independent Ukraine had been unable successfully to resist the Bolsheviks. The delegates to the Peace Conference could hardly devote much time to seeking an "ideal" solution to the problem of Eastern Galicia when constantly pressed by the necessity of making decisions with respect to the changing military situation in that area. The most immediate needs, in their view, were 1) the cessation of hostilities between Poles and Ukrainians, and 2) the strengthening of all forces resisting the advance of Bolshevism. Attempts to arrange an armistice between the Poles and Ukrainians through the instrumentality of an armistice commission functioning in Paris during April and May broke down when both sides refused to accept its draft convention. The anarchy and confusion prevailing in the

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Ukraine and the need for strengthening Poland both against the Germans and against the Bolsheviks led the Conference to take certain steps which prejudiced its final territorial decisions. Action by the Conference helped to save Lwów from falling into Ukrainian hands in the spring of 1919. The Supreme Council arranged the sending of General Haller's Polish army from France to Poland, greatly strengthening the Polish position against the Ukrainians. In May the latter were driven almost entirely out of Eastern Galicia, and in June the Supreme Council authorized Poland to occupy militarily the whole province, explaining the action as a precaution against the "Bolshevik menace", which the Ukrainians were not considered strong enough to combat and were actually aiding through their struggle against anti-Bolshevik Poland. Although this decision was not intended to prejudice the ultimate disposition of Eastern Galicia, it was a blow from which the Ukrainian cause never recovered. The union of the province with Poland, in one form or another, became almost certain.

III. THE AMERICAN POSITION AT THE PEACE CONFERENCE

The study of Eastern Galicia prepared for "The Inquiry" by Dr. Robert H. Lord in the spring of 1918 envisaged five possible solutions of the problem. Three of them (a. maintenance of the existing status quo, b. Austro-Polish solution, c. Austro-Ukrainian solution) were later eliminated from consideration by the disappearance of the Habsburg Empire. The two remaining alternatives were: d. partition of Eastern Galicia between Poland and the Ukraine, and e. union of Eastern Galicia with Poland. Lord's conclusion was that if ethnic consideration alone were to decide the issue, all but the western fringe of Eastern Galicia should go to the Ukraine, but that, if other factors were to be considered (the historic unity of all Galicia, the impossibility of drawing an accurate ethnic line, the advanced cultural and economic status of the Poles in Eastern Galicia as compared to the Ukrainians, and the economic gravitation of Eastern Galicia toward Poland rather than toward the Ukraine), the balance would swing to the side of the assignment of the whole province to Poland. In addition, Dr. Lord concluded that from the standpoint of expediency "it would seem desirable that the Poles should have Eastern Galicia", since the future of the new Ukrainian state was problematical and since "it could hardly be desirable to bring the Russian frontier to the Carpathians." He was of the opinion that, since the Poles had announced their willingness to grant the Ukrainians "extensive autonomy" within Poland, "such concessions, if placed under proper international guarantee, might be the best solution of the problem, as safeguarding the essential needs of the

Ukrainians

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Ukrainians and the vital interests of Poland." Dr. Lord's opinions are of some importance, since he was later to represent the United States on several international commissions set up by the Peace Conference to deal with Polish affairs.

The Cobb-Lippmann "Interpretation" of the Fourteen Points, which was submitted to President Wilson at the end of October 1918, stated that Western Galicia was "clearly Polish" and that Eastern Galicia was "in large measure Ukrainian and did not of right belong to Poland. The Intelligence Section of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, in its report to President Wilson on January 21, 1919 made the following recommendations concerning Eastern Galicia:

The proposed Poland might include on the southeast the hotly disputed and very puzzling territory and population of Eastern Galicia...The region should be assigned to Poland only if the Ukraine is in its present state of chaos, and then only as a self-governing province, guaranteed by the League of Nations the right to decide on its own allegiance at a later date. If at the time of decision by the Peace Conference the Ukraine should give evidences of vitality, the disputed belt should be assigned to it, because in that region the Ukrainians (although very backward in culture) outnumber the Poles two to one.

This recommendation gave definite precedence to the ethnic claims of the Ukrainians over the historical and economic arguments put forward by the Poles. The important proviso concerning the "present state of chaos in the Ukraine", however, left the door open for the incorporation of Eastern Galicia, with guarantees of autonomy, into Poland, the solution previously recommended by Dr. Lord, with the additional stipulation that at some future date the inhabitants would be allowed to exercise the right of self-determination.

In the negotiations at the Peace Conference the American Delegation supported these recommendations at first but gradually approached a position more favorable to the Polish claims. A partial reason for the change was that Dr. Lord who acted as adviser to Secretary Lansing on Polish matters and served as American representative on the Commission on Polish Affairs and on its Sub-Commission for the Study of the Eastern Frontier of Poland, was sympathetic towards the Polish claims. Both Lloyd George and Harold Nicolson have

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described the American experts on Poland, referring especially to Lord, as extremely pro-Polish. Also, the course of events in the Ukraine seemed to eliminate the possibility that any independent Ukrainian state would be established. After the military collapse of the Ukrainians in May and June, the American Delegation adopted the position that the most satisfactory and only practical solution was "to entrust Eastern Galicia to Poland, with the understanding that no change should be made if this should prove satisfactory". After it appeared inevitable that Eastern Galicia would go to Poland, the American Delegation was reluctant to restrict Polish sovereignty either by placing a time limit on it or by hedging it about with guarantees to the Ukrainians. The final decision of the Conference in November 1919, which stipulated that Poland should have a 25-year mandate over Eastern Galicia, was accepted with reluctance by the American Delegation.

IV. POLICIES OF THE OTHER ALLIED POWERS

A. France

The French position on the question of Eastern Galicia was clear. The French were interested in making the new Poland as strong as possible, both against Germany in the west and against the Bolsheviks in the east. They wanted to see Poland and Rumania establish a common frontier and thus to act as a cordon sanitaire protecting Europe against Bolshevism. Such a common frontier, implying the annexation of Eastern Galicia by Poland and of Bukovina by Rumania, could be established only at the expense of the Ukrainians' desire for national unification.

Jules Cambon was chairman of the Commission on Polish Affairs and General Le Rond chairman of the Sub-Commission for the Study of the Eastern Frontier of Poland. These men, in their statements and in their guidance of committee discussions, revealed a tendency to favor the Polish claim to Eastern Galicia, but they were willing to accept such limitations of Polish sovereignty in favor of the Ukrainian population as the Allied and Associated Powers should agree to impose. French military men, like Foch, continued to press for full military support of the Poles against the Ukrainians and for satisfaction of Polish territorial claims, so that the Polish state could be strong. Clemenceau held the same view.

B. Great

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B. Great Britain

The British Delegation to the Peace Conference was the least favorably inclined toward Poland's claim to Eastern Galicia. The British opposed the sending of military aid to the Poles for use against the Ukrainians. They held that the Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia should be allowed to decide their own political allegiance at some later date, since to consult them at the time of the Peace Conference seemed impossible. The British regarded the inclusion within Poland of three million Ukrainians, who at that time were engaged in a bitter war with the Poles, as a solution unlikely to increase Poland's strength or to promote stability in eastern Europe. In the committee discussions the British were generally in a minority of one in defending the interests of the Ukrainians against the tendency on the part of the other delegations to favor the Poles. Since the issue was not one of vital interest to Great Britain, the British representatives found themselves making one compromise after another in the interests of Allied harmony. In the end Lloyd George allowed himself to be convinced by Clemenceau that the powers should retire gracefully from the whole affairs, thus postponing the final settlement and leaving the Poles in de facto possession of Eastern Galicia.

C. Italy

The Italian Delegation remained favorably disposed toward the Polish claims to Eastern Galicia throughout the negotiations. Sonnino argued that the assignment of that province to Poland should be adopted as an immediate and final solution. He opposed all proposals for a plebiscite, for a temporary international administration, or for a mandate. The Italian position was understandable in view of the parallels between the Polish claims in Eastern Galicia and the Italian claims in the Adriatic area. The Italian representatives on the commissions which dealt with Polish questions took little part in the discussions. They generally sided with the French and the Americans against the British, often forcing the latter to abandon their original proposals and to accept the majority view.

V. DETERMINATION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF EASTERN GALICIA'

A. The Western Boundary

That Western Galicia, the solidly Polish-speaking part of the old Austrian Crownland, would go to Poland was not questioned by the Peace Conference. It was assumed that,

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even if Eastern Galicia should also be assigned to Poland, it would retain a special status with international guarantees. It was therefore thought necessary to draw a boundary between Western and Eastern Galicia based primarily on ethnic considerations. This boundary, as part of the eastern boundary of indisputably Polish-populated territory, was to be a continuation of the provisional minimum eastern Polish frontier which the Conference intended to draw through former Russian territory.

The Supreme Council decided on March 19, 1919 that Polish and Ukrainian representatives should not be allowed to present their claims until after the cessation of hostilities in Eastern Galicia. The Commission on Polish Affairs delayed its consideration of the boundary for that reason and because it came to the conclusion that no valid recommendation regarding the boundary could be made until the political status of Eastern Galicia had been more definitely settled. If Eastern Galicia was to be joined in some way to Poland, probabilities favored the establishment of a boundary running to the west of the city of Lwów along the line of separation between overwhelmingly Polish-speaking territory and mixed Ukrainian-Polish territory; whereas, if Eastern Galicia was to be left outside Poland, an alternative boundary passing to the east of Lwów, leaving that city and a part of the mixed territory within Poland, was almost certain to be given serious consideration. Either line could be justified on ethnic grounds.

In its Third Report, submitted on June 17, 1919 the Commission on Polish Affairs presented for the consideration of the Supreme Council two hypothetical boundaries. Line "A", which separated solidly Polish from mixed Polish-Ukrainian territory, ran from the town of Belzec, on the old Russian-Austrian frontier, southwards along the eastern boundaries of the political districts of Cieszanów (Lubaczów), Jaroslaw, Przemyśl, Dobromil and Lesko, leaving all those districts to Poland. Under this solution Poland would have obtained all territory up to the San River and a few districts lying east of the San. Line "B" ran along the Bug River, from the point where it met the former Russian-Austrian frontier, upstream to Kamionka Strumilowa, then southeastwards along the eastern boundaries of the political districts of Zolkiew, Lwów and Bóbrka, westwards across the district of Bóbrka, leaving only its northern half within Poland, then southwestwards along the western boundaries of the districts of Zydaczów, Stryj and Skole. The British representative on the Commission preferred Line "A" no matter what the eventual decision on the political status of Eastern Galicia should be. All members

considered

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considered that Line "A" was preferable in the event that Eastern Galicia should be attached to Poland, either unconditionally, with a provisional or permanent autonomy, or as a mandate. Line "B" was preferred by all but the British representative in the event of a solution which would separate Eastern Galicia from Poland by granting it independence, attaching it to Russia or to the Ukraine, or providing for a provisional international administration. This opinion was based upon recognition of the sentimental and economic value to Poland of the city of Lwów and of the Drohobycz oil-fields region. The British minority opinion pointed out the importance of Lwów as an administrative and communications center for all Eastern Galicia. He said that the Ukrainians would never accept Line "B", which deprived them of the chief city of the province and of an area (between Lines "A" and "B") in which the Ukrainians outnumbered the Poles in a ratio of two-to-one.

The Supreme Council's decision of June 25, authorizing Poland to occupy Eastern Galicia militarily, and to establish a temporary civil government, under agreement with the Allied and Associated Powers, by which the autonomy of the territory and the right of its inhabitants to ultimate self-determination would be preserved, settled the controversy over Lines "A" and "B" in favor of the former. Since Eastern Galicia was to come under Polish rule, temporarily and perhaps permanently, there appeared to be no reason to detach Lwów and the oil-fields region from it.

The Commission on Polish Affairs, in its Fifth Report to the Supreme Council, proposed Line "A" as the western border of Eastern Galicia. The Supreme Council, on November 21, 1919 approved that report.

On December 2, 1919, the Supreme Council agreed on a minimum eastern frontier for Poland in the territory which was formerly part of the Russian Empire. The line previously adopted as the western boundary of Eastern Galicia formed a continuation of that line. Thus the Allied and Associated Powers had drawn a line from the border of East Prussia to the border of Czechoslovakia. All territory lying to the west of that line was considered to be indisputably Polish. The decision of the Supreme Council on the Polish claims to territory situated to the east of it was left for future determination. They were not expressly rejected, and the possibility that Poland's final frontier might run considerably to the east of this minimum boundary was definitely envisaged. However, it was thought desirable not to prejudice the rights of Russia nor to disregard the wishes of the inhabitants of territories lying to the east of the line in which the Poles were, except in a few isolated areas, in the minority.

B. The

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B. The Southeastern Boundary

There was little controversy concerning the other boundaries of Eastern Galicia. On the north and on the east it was decided to retain intact the historic Austrian-Russian boundary and on the south the old boundary between Galicia and Hungary. The assignment of Subcarpathian Ruthenia to Czechoslovakia and of Bukovina to Rumania made it clear that, on the south and the southeast, Eastern Galicia was not to be expanded into a West Ukrainian state. }

The only change given serious consideration was a modification of the Galicia-Bukovina boundary in favor of the former. In the early discussions of the Peace Conference there was general acceptance of the idea of joining to Eastern Galicia a part of the province of Bukovina. In June, 1919 the Supreme Council approved a frontier for Rumania in Bukovina which left outside Rumania the valley of the Czeremosz (Ceremus) River and a small piece of territory in the extreme northwestern corner of Bukovina traversed by the Zaleszczyki-Kolomyja railway. These areas were overwhelmingly Ukrainian in population and their economic connections were with Galicia rather than with Rumania. However, when it had become clear that a Polish administration would be established in Eastern Galicia, the Supreme Council reconsidered its decision on Bukovina, since there seemed to be no valid reason to modify the historic boundary only to place an added number of Ukrainians under Polish jurisdiction. It therefore decided, on November 10, 1919 that all Bukovina should be assigned to Rumania except the small area in the northwestern corner, which was to be incorporated into Eastern Galicia. Meanwhile the Rumanians had occupied all Bukovina up to the historic frontier and never gave up the northwestern corner either to Eastern Galicia or to Poland. In the final attribution of Eastern Galicia to Poland by the Allied Powers in 1923 this small area was not included.

V. THE POLITICAL STATUS OF EASTERN GALICIA

A. The Problem

Because of the uncertainties surrounding the future of Russia and of the Ukraine, the problem of the status of Eastern Galicia was enormously complex. Most of the delegations at the Peace Conference wanted no solution which could be of any possible advantage to the Bolsheviks. At the same time they wanted to reserve all the rights of Russia for the

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time when Russia would again have a "civilized" regime. Russia had no historic claim to Eastern Galicia, but it was realized that at some future time the inhabitants of that province might desire its inclusion within the Russian state. Few of the statesmen and technicians at the Peace Conference had faith in the stability or permanence of any Ukrainian state, but it was generally recognized that the Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia would almost certainly never willingly accept incorporation into Poland. The fear that advantages given to the Ukrainians might in the end be enjoyed by Russia prejudiced the former's claims, as the westward expansion of Russia, Bolshevik, or non-Bolshevik, to the Carpathians was not looked upon with favor. The Poles, on the other hand, were able to make much of their role as defenders of Europe against Bolshevism. Since the Allied Powers had no forces available in Eastern Europe to preserve order, to enforce the decisions of the Conference, or to fight against the Bolsheviks, the Poles and the Ukrainians both offered the services of their respective armies to perform those functions. The Allied Powers, being committed to the creation of a viable Poland and having an interest in not allowing Poland to be crushed between Germany and Soviet Russia, had little hesitation in choosing the Polish army rather than the Ukrainian as the instrument for the restoration of order in Eastern Galicia.

The problem facing the Peace Conference was to find a solution which would take account of the acknowledged need of order and of security in Eastern Europe without depriving the inhabitants of Eastern Galicia of the right of self-determination, which obviously could not be exercised at the time. The situation required a provisional solution which would promote stability in the present and in the immediate future without prejudice to the ultimate settlement.

B. Alternative Solutions Considered

On May 3, 1919 the Supreme Council instructed the Commission on Polish Affairs to study the question of Galicia in all its aspects and to present a number of solutions, listing their advantages and disadvantages but leaving full liberty of judgment to the Council. On June 17 the Commission presented its Third Report, recommending that Western Galicia be joined to Poland and listing the following possible solutions of the problem of Eastern Galicia:

1. Independence

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1. Independence.
2. Provisional Autonomy for a Term of Years, (after which a Plebiscite should be held)
 - a. under a High Commissioner named by the League of Nations;
 - b. under a Great Power with a mandate from the League of Nations;
 - c. under a neighboring state (Poland, Rumania or Czechoslovakia) with a mandate from the League of Nations.
3. Attachment to Poland
 - a. under a mandate from the League of Nations;
 - b. by a federal connection;
 - c. unconditionally.
4. An Immediate Plebiscite under the Control of the League of Nations.

In discussing the advantages and the disadvantages of these various solutions the Report cast doubts on the value of any vote held under the existing conditions and called attention to the difficulty of basing any territorial decision on even the fairest and most perfectly conducted plebiscite in a region of such irregular ethnic distribution. The Report indicated that independence for Eastern Galicia was hardly a practicable solution, since the Ukrainian national movement was undeveloped and was divided into factions with different aims, some wanting union with Russia, others wanting union with other Ukrainian-inhabited areas, and very few advocating an independent Eastern Galicia. It was thought that an independent Eastern Galicia would inevitably be absorbed either by Poland or by Russia in the course of time. The Report stressed the advantages of the establishment of a provisional regime, under which the inhabitants would enjoy a large measure of self-government, to be replaced after a final settlement should have been arrived at on the basis of a plebiscite to be held at some fixed date in the future.

There had been considerable argument among the members of the Commission of Polish Affairs concerning the degree of hatred existing between the Polish and Ukrainian elements of the population in Eastern Galicia. On this point depended the decision as to whether the establishment of Polish control over the disputed region, even on a temporary basis and with guarantees of local autonomy, could be permitted without violating the right of the population to self-determination. The British representative (Sir Eyre Crowe) stressed the permanence and bitterness of the feelings

between

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between Poles and Ukrainians. The French, American and Italian members took the view that the antagonism of the Ukrainians toward the Poles had been artificially stimulated by Austrian policy and had created no unbridgeable gap between the two nationalities. Agreement was finally reached on the following formula: "The Commission is of the opinion that sentiments of animosity toward the Poles indisputably exist among an important fraction of the Ruthenian (Ukrainian) population; it is necessary to take account of the existence of that state of feeling in the elaboration of any system aimed at placing, even in provisional form, the province under the control of Poland. It feels, however, that a system of this type, carefully organized so as to respect local and special rights of the Ruthenian population, could be accepted by the Ruthenians as a provisional solution."

The simple annexation of Eastern Galicia to Poland was mentioned as an alternative "only for the purposes of exposition", since it "would meet legitimate and serious opposition on the part of the Ruthenians, which probably could be suppressed only by force."

When the matter was discussed in the Council of Foreign Ministers, Balfour spoke in favor of the plan to place Eastern Galicia under a High Commissioner appointed by the League of Nations until such time as the circumstances should be propitious for the holding of a plebiscite. All other delegates, however, favored the establishment of a provisional Polish administration. Balfour was finally won over to their view. In the Supreme Council's decision of June 25, which authorized the Polish military occupation of all Eastern Galicia, it was stipulated that Poland should establish in that province a civil government "conditioned to preserve as far as possible the autonomy of the territory and the political, religious and personal liberties of the inhabitants". This was to be accomplished "under an agreement with the Allies predicated upon the ultimate self-determination of the inhabitants of Eastern Galicia as to their political allegiance", the time for the exercise of such choice to be fixed by the Allies. The drafting of this agreement between Poland and the Allied and Associated Powers was assigned to the Commission on Polish Affairs.

Upon occupying Eastern Galicia with the consent of the Peace Conference, the Polish authorities began immediately to set up a Polish civil administration, in which the Ukrainian population was not represented at all. Since the Conference

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had not yet drawn up its plan for an autonomous administration, and since it was obvious that for its task of "pacifying" the province the Polish army needed the cooperation of the civil administration, which could hardly be given over to the Ukrainians, the Conference did not protest against these actions by the Polish Government. Although it was announced that none of these ad hoc decisions would be allowed to affect the final disposition of Eastern Galicia, which was to be made at a later date, there was no doubt that the decisions of the Conference on June 25 represented a victory for the Poles and a defeat for the Ukrainians. The Ukrainian leaders immediately announced that they did not recognize the decisions and would not appear before any Peace Conference body until they were annulled.

C. Elaboration of the Scheme for an Autonomous Eastern Galicia Temporarily Annexed to Poland

During the summer of 1919 the Commission on Polish Affairs and its Sub-Commission for the Study of the Eastern Frontiers of Poland held meeting after meeting for the purpose of drawing up the draft agreement between Poland and the Allies defining the status of Eastern Galicia during the provisional period preceding the plebiscite. Considerable attention was devoted to the questions of the relations between the diets of Poland and of Eastern Galicia, the representation of Eastern Galicia in the Polish Diet, land reform, and service of inhabitants of Eastern Galicia in the Polish army. In the draft finally submitted to the Supreme Council on August 20, as the Fifth Report of the Commission on Polish Affairs, majority and minority views on these points were presented. The minority view in each case was that of the British delegation, which wanted to limit Polish control over Eastern Galicia to a minimum. The final article of the draft agreement provided that the autonomous regime should endure for a ten-year period, at the end of which the Allied Powers would fix the date and the method of the consultation of the inhabitants as to their choice of a permanent regime.

The Council of Foreign Ministers discussed but did not adopt the proposed "statute" for Eastern Galicia. Finally, on September 25, it invited Paderewski to present Poland's views on the question. Paderewski implored the Council not to insist on a provisional regime and a plebiscite in Eastern Galicia, which he said should be ceded to Poland without further ado. Poland, he said, had already made known its decision to grant autonomy to Eastern Galicia and

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had restored order there; the Polish people were "at a loss to understand the decisions taken by the Peace Conference". These arguments were taken up by the American and the French representatives, Undersecretary Polk and M. Jules Cambon, who abandoned the idea of establishing a provisional regime and eventually holding a plebiscite, on the grounds that such a policy would create "a region of discord". The best guarantee of order and stability, they held, lay in the definite attribution of Eastern Galicia to Poland, with an international guarantee of its autonomy. Sir Eyre Crowe could not agree to these arguments. He held that it had always been the desire of the Supreme Council not to place obstacles in the way of an ultimate union of Eastern Galicia with Russia or with a Ukrainian state. He said that the British delegation had originally opposed even the temporary union of Eastern Galicia with Poland and had finally accepted it only because provision for an eventual plebiscite was included. Crowe remained firm in his stand and no agreement could be reached.

D. The Plan for a Polish Mandate over Eastern Galicia

The idea of giving Poland a mandate over Eastern Galicia was introduced in an attempt to break the deadlock. The French and the American delegations agreed to a mandate in principle and wanted it to be of indefinite duration. The British favored a mandate for a fixed period, to be followed by a reconsideration of the whole question. After much debate the Supreme Council finally adopted, on November 21, a revised draft agreement, which provided that Poland should have a mandate over Eastern Galicia for a period of twenty-five years, at the termination of which the Council of the League of Nations would decide what disposition should be made of the province.

This decision of the Supreme Council evoked protests from the representatives of Poland, who insisted that Eastern Galicia was a Polish province and said that the Polish army, fighting for European civilization against Bolshevism, might become demoralized if Poland were forced to govern Eastern Galicia as a mandate instead of in full sovereignty. Ukrainian leaders also protested, denouncing the Supreme Council for abandoning the formula which it had adopted on June 25; although they had protested against the decision of June 25 at the time, they now tried to hold the Supreme Council to it in order to keep it from going even further toward satisfaction of the Polish claims.

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Not only the Poles and the Ukrainians but the Allied statesmen themselves had doubts about the solution which they had adopted. The American and French delegations by this time had come to the conclusion that, since Eastern Galicia had been "pacified", insistence by the Allies on a temporary regime or on a plebiscite would serve only to stir up unrest and trouble for the future. They had, indeed, accepted the Polish point of view that the only logical solution was the assignment of the province to Poland, with guarantees that the liberties of the Ukrainian population would be respected. Since the shelving of the mandate solution was likely to be opposed only by the British, Clemenceau took up the matter directly with Lloyd George and persuaded him that the Allies should retreat from the position they had taken. On December 22, 1919 the Supreme Council, with the United States no longer represented, agreed that "the recent resolution which accorded to Poland a 25-years mandate for Eastern Galicia should be suspended and the question should be re-examined later". This face-saving formula left the political status of Eastern Galicia entirely open, with not even a temporary solution agreed upon by the Allies. When the detailed "statute" for an autonomous Eastern Galicia worked out by the Commission on Polish Affairs and the mandate scheme were both discarded, the Poles remained in occupation of the province without obligations or conditions of any kind. Sovereignty over it, however, remained in the hands of the Allied and Associated Powers, to which Austria had ceded it by the Treaty of Saint-Germain (Sept. 10, 1919).

VI. THE QUESTION OF EASTERN GALICIA IN 1920

A. The Polish-Soviet War and the British Armistice Proposal

The Allied Powers having left the disposition of Eastern Galicia in abeyance, Poland attempted to strengthen its hold on the province by concluding an agreement with the (Eastern) Ukrainian People's Republic of Petliura, who was then resident in Poland, by which Petliura accepted the Polish possession of Eastern Galicia in return for recognition and military assistance, and by a preventive military campaign against the Bolsheviks. The army of Pilsudski met with initial success and drove the Soviet armies back, occupying Kiev in May 1920. The tide turned, however, and by July the Polish army had been driven back almost to the line laid down by the Peace Conference.

The British Government, in trying to bring about an armistice between the Poles and the Bolsheviks, proposed

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that the Polish armies retire to the line laid down by the Peace Conference in 1919 as the provisional eastern frontier of Poland, and that the Soviet armies remain fifty kilometers to the east of that line. The note sent by Lord Curzon to Moscow on July 11, in which this proposal was made, was ambiguous in that its text contained two different proposals for Eastern Galicia. It described the proposed armistice line as running from Grodno to the Bug, thence along the Bug, "east of Grubeshov, Krilov, and thence west of Rawa Ruska, east of Przemyśl to the Carpathians". The line described was the line of December 8, whose southern terminus was at the northern border of Eastern Galicia, plus the western boundary of Eastern Galicia as laid down by the Supreme Council on November 20, 1919. If the line described in the British note was intended as an armistice line, then the British Government was proposing the evacuation of all Eastern Galicia by the Poles. However, the British note also proposed that "in Eastern Galicia each army will stand on the line which they occupy at the date of the signature of the armistice". In the agreement which the Polish Prime Minister signed on the previous day at Spa this same provision in regard to Eastern Galicia had been inserted.

The Soviet Government's refusal of the British armistice proposals made it unnecessary for the British to clarify the references made to Eastern Galicia in the note of July 11. The question is of interest because government circles in London, in proposing as an armistice line the provisional frontier laid down by the Peace Conference, considered it to be the boundary between non-Polish territory and the "ethnic Poland" which they were willing to defend against Russian aggression. Lloyd George considered it desirable as a final frontier and at the least as a basis of negotiations for a final frontier. It is not clear whether the British envisaged a final frontier extending to the Carpathians along the line described in the note of July 11. Certainly they regarded Eastern Galicia as lying outside "ethnic Poland", as they had in 1919. However, there is no evidence to show that they favored Soviet acquisition of Eastern Galicia, which had never been a part of imperial Russia. The note of July 11 proposed that a conference be convened in London to conclude peace and final territorial settlements between Soviet Russia and its neighboring states; it was to be held under the auspices of the Peace Conference and attended by representatives of Soviet Russia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland. "Representatives of Eastern Galicia" also were to be invited and to be allowed to state their

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case to the conference. This proposal indicates that the British Government considered the status of Eastern Galicia as still open, although it had been under Polish administration for a year, and as requiring settlement as a part of the final frontier settlement between Soviet Russia and Poland. Legally, however, sovereignty still belonged to the Allied and Associated Powers, and Soviet Russia had no right to a voice in its disposition. The Polish Prime Minister, in the agreement he signed at Spa on July 10, had already agreed to accept whatever decision the Supreme Council should make on the future of Eastern Galicia. Lloyd George apparently looked forward to a compromise solution which would take some account of the desires of the inhabitants and of the possible claims of Soviet Russia. In this attitude he did not have the support either of the French or of the American Government, both of which felt that the participation of Soviet Russia in a final territorial settlement would involve recognition of the Soviet regime, which they did not desire, and the violation of the integrity of "true" boundaries of Russia, which they desired to see re-established after the re-entry of Russia into the community of nations under a non-Bolshevik regime.

B. The Polish-Russian Settlement, 1920-1921

By the middle of 1920 much of the uncertainty over the future of Russia and of the Ukraine which had existed at the time of the Peace Conference had disappeared. There were now three fairly clear alternative solutions of the problem of Eastern Galicia; it could be joined to Poland or to the Soviet Ukraine, or it could be partitioned between them. The various schemes for an independent Ukrainian state were no longer taken seriously except by Ukrainian nationalists.

No formal claim to Eastern Galicia was made by the Soviet Government, but when the Soviet armies invaded Eastern Galicia in late July of 1920, they immediately set up soviets of soldiers and workers. The Soviet Government obviously intended to incorporate all Eastern Galicia into the Soviet state. But at that time they also hoped to incorporate all Poland, where they counted on a military victory and on a proletarian revolution. They did not take the trouble to assert claims to Eastern Galicia as part of Soviet Ukraine when it appeared that there would also be a Soviet Poland and that the location of the administrative boundary between them would be unimportant.

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VII. ALLIED ACCEPTANCE OF POLAND'S POSSESSION OF EASTERN GALICIA

A. Eastern Galicia under Polish Occupation, 1920-1923

The Allied Powers did not consider the Treaty of Riga to have settled the status of Eastern Galicia, since neither Poland nor Soviet Russia had the legal right to dispose of territory ceded by Austria to the Allies. For two years, however, they postponed their own decision on the question. The League of Nations, in 1921 and again in 1922, reminded them of "the desirability of determining at an early date the status of Eastern Galicia". The League itself had no jurisdiction over the question, since the project of a mandate had been abandoned and no minority treaty applied to the territory. At the Genoa Conference in 1922, where the whole subject of Russia's relations with the Entente Powers was discussed, Lloyd George brought up the question of Eastern Galicia and pressed for an immediate settlement, but the French delegation maintained that this was a matter for the Supreme Council, not for the Conference, at which both Germany and Soviet Russia were represented, and no action was taken.

Meanwhile Poland was systematically consolidating its position in Eastern Galicia. Elections were held there on the same basis as in the areas which the Allies recognized definitely as parts of Poland. The Polish military laws were applied in Eastern Galicia. Ukrainian youths were conscripted into the Polish army. Ukrainian national organizations protested against these and other measures, such as the collection of taxes, on the grounds that they were unjustified under the "temporary military occupation" by Poland which the Allied Powers had authorized. The Ukrainian leaders loudly demanded action by the Allies which would ensure their right of national self-determination. The emigré Ukrainian government in Vienna and Ukrainian organizations in France, Canada and the United States made vigorous appeals to the Allied governments, to the League of Nations, and to public opinion, demanding an independent Ukrainian state in Eastern Galicia. The Allied Powers showed no inclination to encourage the Ukrainian aspirations. The possibility of an independent Eastern Galicia had been rejected at the Peace Conference, and it seemed even less desirable in 1921 and 1922. The liquidation of the independence movement in the Eastern Ukraine, and the Soviet renunciation of Eastern Galicia in the Treaty of Riga, had eliminated all possibility of a larger Ukrainian state which would

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include Eastern Galicia. Since the Allied Powers had abandoned the mandate project and the principle of ultimate self-determination after a fixed period under a provisional regime, they had little choice but to accept the incorporation of Eastern Galicia into Poland.

From the first the Polish Government had stated its willingness to respect the civil liberties and the national culture of the Ukrainians, and even to grant autonomy to Eastern Galicia, provided Poland's full sovereignty over the province should be recognized. In 1919 the Polish Diet, in proclaiming Poland's right to all Galicia, guaranteed equal rights as Polish citizens to the Ukrainian population. In protesting against the mandate scheme adopted at the Peace Conference, the Polish delegates told the Supreme Council that the only possible solution was to assign Eastern Galicia to Poland as an autonomous province, subject if necessary to effective international control. In 1922, in order to quiet the Ukrainian nationalists and to hasten a favorable decision on the part of the Allies, the Polish Diet voted to establish, within two years, a detailed special regime for the three provinces of Lwów, Tarnopol and Stanislawów, which covered the whole area of Eastern Galicia and some additional territory, strongly Polish in population, situated to the west of the line laid down by the Peace Conference as Eastern Galicia's western border. Each of these provinces was to have a legislature of two chambers, one Polish and one Ukrainian. The legislatures were to have power over questions of religion, education, public welfare, and certain economic matters. An autonomous state-supported Ukrainian university was to be established.

The Polish Government submitted this law for comment to the British, French and Italian Governments, France and Italy found it satisfactory. The British Government expressed dissatisfaction over the small degree of autonomy but made no suggestions. It was assumed in London that the law would be put into effect at once and that there would be time to observe its effects in practice before the final decision on Eastern Galicia's future status would be made.

B. The Decision of the Conference of Ambassadors, 1923

On March 15, 1923 the Conference of Ambassadors, at which the United States was represented only by an observer, made a decision fixing the final status of Eastern Galicia. It simply accepted the line of the

Treaty

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Treaty of Riga as the eastern frontier of Poland, thus leaving all of Eastern Galicia to Poland. The Allied Powers took note of "Poland's recognition that ethnographic conditions make necessary a regime of autonomy" and of the rights guaranteed to all minorities in Poland, but they imposed no obligations on Poland to give Eastern Galicia a special status.

No autonomous regime was ever established in Eastern Galicia by the Polish Government, and the constitutional arrangements provided by the law of 1922 were never put into effect. The Ukrainian population had no guarantees of ultimate self-determination and no rights of even limited self-government within the Polish state. Polish-Ukrainian antagonism remained strong throughout the whole period that Poland remained in possession of Eastern Galicia.

The solution adopted by the Conference of Ambassadors in 1923 was one of the alternatives which the Commission on Polish Affairs in 1919 had put at the bottom of its list of possible solutions, mentioning it only "for the purposes of exposition" and stating that it would provoke legitimate and serious opposition on the part of the Ukrainians which probably could be suppressed only by force. The gradual retreat from the principle of national self-determination to full acceptance of the Polish claims, which denied self-determination to the Ukrainian majority, illustrated the difficulty of applying the Wilsonian principles in the regions along Russia's western frontier, where ethnic groups were ill-defined and the nationality problems not suited to clear-cut territorial solutions. These difficulties were made insuperable by the complex four-cornered military struggle involving the Bolsheviks, the Poles, the White armies of Denikin and Wrangel, and the various Ukrainian national groups with different aims. The great uncertainty about the fate of Russia, magnified by the refusal of the Entente Powers to see in the Bolshevik regime anything but a temporary phenomenon, made it impossible for the Peace Conference to hold a plebiscite or to apply any other formula on which a solution responding to the will of the inhabitants could be based. The attempt to establish a provisional regime or a mandate which would postpone the consultation of the people until some future date occasioned such wrangling among the Allies that all were willing to abandon it when it was vehemently opposed by the Poles. Ultimately the fortunes of war settled both the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Russian conflicts over Eastern Galicia in favor of Poland. That outcome was

eminently

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eminently satisfactory to the French, while the British, who had never been sympathetic to Polish claims to territory beyond "ethnic Poland" and were less worried about the possible advance of Russia to the Carpathians, had decided by 1923 that a quiet approval of the existing situation was the only remaining practicable solution of a problem which had vexed them for four years. There had been a change of government in Great Britain, and the new government was concerned to avoid any commitments which might lead to a demand for intervention. The British view was that the Allied Powers should assume no responsibility for the autonomy project.

C. The American Position on the Decision of March 15, 1923

The United States Government took no official position on the question of the status of Eastern Galicia at the time of the Treaty of Riga (March 18, 1921) in which Soviet Russia recognized Polish sovereignty over that province. In November of that year the Department of State informed the British Embassy in Washington that the matter was one "of European political concern in which this Government, in accord with its traditional policy, would take no part."

After the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors on March 15, 1923, the Department of State took the position that the status and boundaries of Eastern Galicia, as fixed by that decision, had the assent of all directly interested parties and therefore existed as a matter of fact. Faced with the necessity of taking concrete decisions in connection with the administration of the immigration laws, the Secretary of State, on March 26, addressed a letter to the Secretaries of State, Commerce, and Labor, advising them that this Government "took cognizance of the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors, which was in harmony with the assertions of territorial sovereignty by Poland and effectively attributed to Poland the regions of Pinsk and Eastern Galicia."

The Polish Minister in Washington inquired whether the United States Government would be disposed to communicate to the Polish Government some expression in the nature of "good wishes" upon the settlement of the eastern boundaries of Poland. The Department of State thereupon informed the American Legation at Warsaw that "it was the general policy of the Department to avoid participating in purely European territorial adjustments and to accept such adjustments, when effected by the Governments concerned, as facts with respect to which this Government was not called upon to express either approval or disapproval." The Legation was authorized to communicate to the Polish Government that the United States had "taken cognizance" of the decision of the Conference of Ambassadors.

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When the chargé d'affaires of Lithuania inquired of the Department whether the act of "taking cognizance" of the decision could be construed as recognition of the Polish frontiers which it established, he was told that "it could be construed as recognition of the adjustments made as facts, but that we did not wish to enter into the equities of European territorial adjustments."

D. The Soviet Position on the Status of Eastern Galicia, 1923-24

By the Treaty of Riga Soviet Russia and Soviet Ukraine "waived and abandoned all claims" to Eastern Galicia. During the negotiations, however, the chief of the Soviet delegation had stated his government's view that the fate of Eastern Galicia should be decided by the freely manifested will of its inhabitants. At the same time a declaration to that effect was made by the Central Executive Committee of the R.F.S.F.R. Even after the treaty was signed, the Soviet Government maintained an interest in the Ukrainians of Eastern Galicia, whose language, religion and culture Poland was obligated by the Riga treaty to respect and to protect.

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Both before and after the definite assignment of Eastern Galicia to Poland by the Conference of Ambassadors, the Soviet Government proclaimed its right to a voice in the settlement of Eastern Galicia's status on both legal and moral grounds. In a series of public statements and notes to the Polish Government, it put forward the following arguments:

1. While the Soviet Government regarded the Riga treaty as binding, it could not consider that the waiving of claims to any territory by a government was tantamount to recognition by such government of any international regime then or later established on the territory in question; consequently it did not recognize as definitive the status established for Eastern Galicia by the Conference of Ambassadors and considered the matter an international question not yet settled;
2. The Eastern Galician question having been recognized as an international question even before the decision of March 23, 1923, the Soviet Union, one of the directly interested powers, had not been consulted and had not entrusted either the Conference of Ambassadors or the Polish Government with the defense of its interests;

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3. The decision of the Conference of Ambassadors was a "rude violation of previously assumed obligations" to submit the question of Eastern Galicia to the free determination of the will of the population;
4. The fate of any country could not be settled definitely unless such settlement was arrived at with the open and clearly expressed consent of its population;
5. The Soviet Government's renunciation of territorial claims in the Riga treaty "did not mean that the fate of the Ukrainian people, which forms over 70 percent of the total population of Eastern Galicia, can be a matter of indifference to the same Ukrainian people that populates the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and a fortiori it did not mean that the Union Government concedes to the Polish state the right of annexing Eastern Galicia, the population of which has repeatedly expressed in sharp forms its protest against its incorporation into the territory of Poland";
6. Poland's occupation of Eastern Galicia was "an act of violence", and the Governments of the R.F.S.F.R. and of the Ukrainian S.S.R. (later of the Soviet Union) would consider as null and void the establishment of any regime whatever in Eastern Galicia without their previous agreement and without a consultation of the population.

The legal validity of these arguments was dubious, but they illustrated the continuing interest of the Soviet Government in the fate of Eastern Galicia. While the decision taken by the Conference of Ambassadors in 1923 may have been the only realistic solution possible at the time, the Soviet reaction to it served to point out its two glaring weaknesses, of which the Allied statesmen had been aware but which they had never been in a position to overcome, namely the disregard of the right of the Ukrainian majority to self-determination and the disregard of the influence and claims which Russia, whenever it should regain its military strength, would be certain to assert.

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